THREE MINUTES

(1 – 25)

A.S. Rajagopalan

Introduction

This series on Three Minutes is a collection of short essays on Srivaishnava philosophy. As the name implies, it will take on the average three minutes to read. Each one is targeted towards a verse or advice from the vedas, divya prabhandam, or aacharya works rooted on the Visishta Advatitam.

Three goals were kept in mind while writing this. 1. Brevity. 2. Simplicity. 3. Concept Application. This is targeted to those who have little to no exposure to Srivaishnavam. Deep precision of complex concepts are avoided so that kids can also understand and enjoy. When complex words are introduced, the equivalent Sanskrit or Tamil words are given in parenthesis for clarification.

Instead of dwelling through entirely on the aazvaar's enjoyment (anubhavam) or dealing with intricate internal meanings (svapadesam), these essays highlight the basic understanding of the philosophy and the application of such concepts by common people. Rules are relaxed, concepts are approximated, explanations are simplified, and verbosity is avoided to make the essay for an easy, casual read within three minutes. Several cross quotes may be presented in each essay, but is generally avoided due to space constraints.

I beg the pardon of the scholars for all the errors and omissions that surely might occurred in this document. I have started this venture to share my ideas with younger generation who haven't the luxury of being brought up in India.

Thank You for your cooperation.

adiYen,
/rajagopalan

CONTENTS

1. Wealth, handle with care
2. Erros corrected to excellence
3. Pray to God, but row away from the rock
4. Faults found to be fabulous?
5. The True Relative
6. Mind, the command and control center
7. Relation is mutual
8. Means and Ends
9. Is anyone flawless?
10. The Ten Commandments
11. What does love know about sleep?
12. Keeping up His word
13. How do I define thee, let me count the ways!
14. Better than the real thing?, think again
15. Who is bigger, you or me?
16. A loyal servant
17. Say it with less

18. When one equals everything

19. Sinners can be winners too

20. The path to the tower of wisdom

21. Life is short. Pray Him hard.

22. The smart choice is right in front of you!

23. Lamenting like a bird lost in the high seas

24. Teacher Student Relation

25. Ohhhhhhn no. not my people! Never!

Three Minutes - 1

Wealth - Fragile, handle with care

KoL enRu kiLarnthu ezuntha perunjselvam neruppaaka
KoL enRu thamam moodum ivai enna iyaRkai !
(Nammazhvar Tiruvaaymozi 4-9-4)

கொள் என்று கிளர்ந்து எழுந்த பெருஞ்செல்வம் நெருப்பாக
கொள் என்று தமம் மூடும் இவை என்ன இயற்கை
(நம்மாழ்வார், திருவாய்மொழி 4-9-4)

Perum= Huge
Selvam = Wealth
Enru = how (it)
koL = (begs, please) accept me in
kiLarnthu = (like a) fiercely
Ezuntha = rose
Neruppaaka = fire
Ivai = (in fact) these (actually)
Moodum = closes
Thamam = (one's) control of senses
Enna = what a
iyaRkai = natural phenomena

This verse (paasuram) is found in Tiruvoizmozhi, one of the four hymns (prabhandams) created by Nammaazvaar (our Srivaishnava saint). Here aazvaar compares the wealth to a blazing fire.

Human desires are limitless. Many of those are quenched through acquiring wealth. This wealth initially begs them "please take me in, please take me in". Fascinated by this appeal, people indulge to accumulate more.

But, once the wealth is landed comfortably within their mind and wallet, it surrounds them and eventually destroys them like a blazing fire. This concept is nothing new and is occurring everyday. Though it is transparent, people still go and fall into this trap. What an amazing natural phenomenon!

The moral here is

1. **Wealth is both the cause and destroyer of happiness**
   Though, most think wealth is basic ingradient for happiness, they forget nothing comes free.

2. **People surrounding the wealthy, don't like them.**
   They are jealous and will try to do all the mischief.

3. **Contentment is essential.**
   Nammazhvaar here emphasizes contenment as stressed in Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, etc. If one does not exercise content, he will never be happy even if he could get everything in the univerese.

4. **Handle the wealth with care.**
   Wealth is like a fire. If you go too close, it burns you; staying

too far away, it leaves you in cold.

Money can buy a bed,
but not sleep;
it can buy medicine, but not
cure the disease.

Three Minutes - 2

Errors corrected to Excellence

ThErntha adiyavar thammaith thiruththip paNi koLLa valla Aarntha pugazh Acchuthanai amarar pirAnai
(*Namaazvaar, Tiruvoizmozhi 3-5-11)*

தீர்ந்த அடியவர் தம்மைத் திருத்திப் பணி கொள்ள வல்ல ஆர்ந்த புகழ் அச்சுதனை அமரர் பிரானை
(நம்மாழ்வார், திருவாய்மொழி 3-5-11)

Adiyavar = Devotees of the Lord
ThErntha = who are determined (that he Lord is the sole means and ends),
thammai = for those
paNi = (in their) service
Thiruththi = correct the errors, if any
koLLa valla = and accepts them
Aarntha = (is) the most capable,
Pugazh = celebrated
Achuthanai = Lord who never gives up on his devotees
Amarar piraanai = (and who is the) chief of all Gods

Devotees to the Lord are at several levels. The intense are the ones who have an immense faith on Him (paramaikanthi) and have complete and consistent conviction that He is the sole means, results, and the savior. They enjoy performing service to the Lord and His devotees as the final and only objective. Even when an iota of mistake happen inadvertently, the Lord corrects them willingly, immediately and accepts their flawless service. Who is that Lord?, if one would ask, it is none other than the one who is so talented, famed, and the most reliant God of Gods, Srimun Narayana.

Here, Nammazhvar brings the metaphoric comaparison of faith and reliability to action and reaction. Newton's 3rd Law of motion, which states "For every action, there is an equivalent and opposite reaction" fails miserably here.

When one puts such a tiny amount of faith on Him, the Lord feels so loyal and responds to it in multiple proportions. One can only imagine what would be the outcome when one's faith is huge and unshakeable!

The moral here is

1. **Don't worry about the future**
   No one has to worry about the quality of rest of the days here, specifically those who have done total surrender (prapannas) to the Lord.

2. **Don't worry about making a mistake**
   Have a complete faith on Him. He will lead the way and will not make you a mistake andwill lead you the right way..

Faith is like electricity. It is hard to see, but easy to benefit from it.

Three Minutes - 3

Pray to God, but row away from the rock

karmaNy eva adhikaaras te
maa phaleshu kadacana
maa karma pala hetur bhur
maa te sango 'stv akarmaNi
(Bhagavad Geeta 2-47)

te = You
eva = only
adhikaara = have the right
karmaNy = for prescribed duties
maa = never (control/claim)
phaleshu = in the outcome
kadacana = at anytime
te = You
maa bhuh = should not be
karma phala hetu = motivated by the results
maa = nor
astu = should there be
sangah = attachment
akarmaNi = (in) refraining from duties

This is a very popular sloka in Bhagavad Geeta. Using Arjuna as an excuse (vyaajam / chaaku), Lord Parthasarathy (Arjuna's chariot driver) addresses the entire human race. In this particular sloka, Krishna says people only have the right to perform the activities and not to anticipate the results. They should never be motivated by the expected results nor have any desire to refrain from duties.

This is a very powerful sloka and my attempt to explain this will be at the basic level. Four things are apparent here :

3. **Do the duties**
   Duties are spiritual injunctions, which are commands of the Lord.They vary according to varna, the order in society and ashrama, the stages in life. These are mandatory karma (actions) and must be performed without any exception.
   What we learn is to differentiate between "must do" and "like to do"

4. **Don't expect any return.**
   While doing the above duties, don't expect anything in return.
   What we learn is to removing anticipation protects you from disappointment.

5. **Never assume you or your action is responsible for the result**
   God never said that there is no reward for those actions, but simply indicated that you don't determine the time, location and magnitude of the results. His Dispensing of fruits of actions is under His own bookkeeping control. You can't get it or avoid it by your own free will.
   What we learn - Remove the ego and start believing everything is His blessing.

6. **Don't shrug off from actions.**
   Results should never be instrumental in doing or shrugging off from duties.

What We learn is to develop strong conviction towards our sastras and fear to disobey them

Though the above advice of decoupling actions and results is for mandatory duties, it would be worthwhile to apply for all actions in all walks of life. In summary, do the duty to the best of your ability and leave the rest to God. Try it next time when you take a test, attend an interview or do a favor to someone; concentrate on the action without anticipating about the results!

[Note: The word adhikara here has several meanings - ability, control, discretion, choice, command, right, jurisdiction, prerogative, privilege, preference etc.]

As expectation goes lower, appreciation goes higher.

Three Minutes - 4
Faults found to be fabulous

kunRanaiya kuRRam seyinum
kuNam koLLum
inRu muthalaaka en nenjae,
(Poigai Azhvaar, Muthal Tirvanthaathi - 41)

குன்றனைய குற்றம் செய்யினும்
குணம் கொள்ளும்
இன்று முதலா என் நெஞ்சே
(பொய்கையாழ்வார், முதல் திருவந்தாதி - 41)

en nenjae = oh, my heart !
inRu = (from) today
muthalaaka = onwards
seyinum = (even when people) do
kunRanaiya = mountain like
kuRRam = faults
kuNangoLLum = take only the good

This verse is sung by Poigai Azhvaar, the first of the 10 (or 12) celebrated Azhvaars. Azhvaars believed to be lived around 6- 8th century B.C. They were convinced that Srimun Narayana is the final and ultimate God. Mezmerized by His extreme characters to rescue even the lowest people like us, these Azhvars poured out their feelings in Tamil songs. This collection of 4000 verses is called Naalaayira Divya Prabhanadam, which is the Tamil Marai equivalent of Sanskrit Vedas. Each stanza is called a paasuram (Paa + Swaram = poem with music).

The Lord has innumerable qualities like beauty, authority, energy, knowledge etc. But one character, dhaya or mercy stands above everything. As appreciated by many of our acharyas, despite of His power and independence, we can approach Him only because of this ocean of mercy. With His extreme kindness, he doesn't shut the door, pardons the mistakes however many or huge they may be. All it takes is to realize one's mistakes, pray to the Lord for the pardon and His grace, and assure himself not to repeat those again.

The Lord's auspicious characters goes one step further to Vaathsalyam. It simply means the Lord ignores the flaws of His devotees. They don't even appear in His eyes. Just like, how a mother cow licks with tender loving care of its newly born calf while completely ignoring the dirt and "yuck" on the calf's body.

Everyone else outside might see the dirt, but the mother cow does not. That is the magnanimity of the Lord and His great quality called vaathsalyam. Here, the Azhvaar makes surrender to the Lord and says "From today, I have become liberated. You will protect me, guide me and will never let me do any harm to others. In case, by some accident, if I ever flawed, it will look only good to Your eyes and You will not refuse me".

In our busy daily life, we often get mad on people for no reason, despite of most of their good deeds and great qualities. At times. we are too narrowly focused on finding faults on others and somehow, the goodness slowly slips away from our conscious mind. What we do is exactly the inverse of what our Lord is doing and our scripts are preaching. Take a moment and try hard to find the goodness in people. Ignore any harm they do to you intentionally or unknowingly. You will be surprised to see how they react. You will be more surprised at how you have been changed!

To err is human, to forgive is divine.

Three Minutes - 5
The true relative!

ariyathu eLithaakum aaRRalaal maaRRi
peruka muyalvaaraip peRRaal - kariyathu oor
veNkoottu maal yaanai venRi
mudithathu anRee
thaNkoottu maamalaraal thaaznthu
(puuthathaazvaar,
iraNdaam thiruvanthaathi - 22)

அரியது எளிதாகும் ஆற்றலால் மாற்றி
பெருக முயல்வாரைப் பெற்றால் - கரியது ஓர்
வெண்கோட்டு மால் யானை வென்றி முடித்தது அன்றே
தண்கோட்டு மாமலராள் தாழ்ந்து
(பூதத்தாழ்வார்,
இரண்டாம் திருவந்தாதி - 22)

maaRRi = By changing
aaRRalaal = (one's own) capabilities (and)
peRRaal = getting into (feet of)
muyalvaaraip = (The one who makes) attempts
peruka = innumerable times
ariyathu = (then) hard tasks
eLithaakum = will become easier
[This is obvious in the case of]
oor = One
maal = big
veNkoottu = white tusksed
kariyathu = black colored
yaanai =elephant
venRi = successfully
mudithathu = completed
anRee = on that day
thaNkoottu = (in that) cold lake
maamalaraal = (with) red lotus flowers
thaaznthu = by bowing and surrendering

This verse is sung by puuthaththaazvaar, second in the aazvaar dynasty. When one deserts his ego, realizes that the Lord makes infinite efforts to rescue His devotees, and hold on to His feet, even impossible tasks will be so easy. This is obvious, when that white tusked, large black elephant, while bathing in a cold lake, surrendered to the Lord and made a last appeal from the moments of death (from the glitches of the crocodile) while carrying beautiful lotus flowers.

Aazvaar brings out the vivid description of Gajendra moksham incident as described in Srimad Bhagavatam (one of the eighteen puraanas). As usual, Gajendra, the noble elephant, was bathing in the lake and was getting the flowers to put under Lord's feet. All of a sudden a crocodile came from underneath and grabbed his feet wildly. Gajendra tried to get out but the crocodile grip was so strong.

The elephant - crocodile fight lasted for a thousand years. For the first five hundred years, the self-confident elephant thought that it could squash the crocodile. When it went in vain, the next five hundred years he made a death plea to his family and friends for assistance. That also was useless. Finally, he realized that Lord is the only

protector and made an emotional plea to Him by making total surrender. The Lord appeared on his Garuda vehicle and rescued him by killing the crocodile with his sudarsana, the disc.

The moral here is to

1. **identify who is your true relative.**
   Who is the real protector that is waiting to rescue you at any cost and doesn't ask anything in return. Is it our siblings, parents, other relatives, friends ? Well, they are only to a certain extent. At times, they may give up or the task may be beyond their abilities. Lord Srimun Narayana is omnipotent, the universal protector, and a permanent relative to us. All other relations are only as long as the body still exist.

2. **Make your relative happy**
   Instead of falling at the feet of the doorkeeper, why don't you surrender to the boss inside? Do prapatti, a total surrender to Him, and He will definitely make you happy.

3. **Rise up with good thoughts**
   Our acharyas advise you to think of Gajendra moksham when you get up in the morning so that all your activities for the day will be positive and productive.

Your relation to the Lord is eternal and to the rest are only temporary.

Three Minutes - 6
Mind, the command and control center

oorththa manaththaraay ainthu adakki aaraaynthu peerththaal piRapppu eezum peerkkalaam
(peeyaazvaar,
muunRaam thiruvawthaathi - 79)

ஓர்ந்த மனத்தராய் ஐந்து அடக்கி ஆராய்ந்து பேர்த்தால் பிறப்பு ஏழும் பேர்க்கலாம்
(பேயாழ்வார்,
இரண்டாம் திருவந்தாதி - 79)

oorththa = (By having) a concentrated
manaththaraay = mind,
adakki = controlling
ainthu = the five (organs),
aarraynthu = (and) deeply researched ideas of
peerththaal = turning away (from lowly pleasures)
peerkkalaam = (one can) get rid of
eezum = seven (janmas of)
piRappu = birth

This verse is sung by peeyaazvaar, 3rd in the aazvaar dynasty. Unlike others, he starts his poem by paying tribute to Sri (Mahalakshmi), who is the inseparable consort of Srimun Narayana. The Lord Narayana is always referred with an adjective "Srimun" preceding His name. It is Sri + muth, means inseparable from Sri.

In this verse, peeyaazvaar suggests that the task of getting out of the birth/death cycle (samsaara) is not a difficult one. The four different methods (upaayam) prescribed in scripts (pramaanams) are - Duties, Knowledge, Devotion and Surrender (Karma, Gnjana, Bhakthi and Prapatti). The aspirant for permanent bliss (moksha) might first start with controlling the senses (indriya nigraham).

Humans are blessed with five knowledge organs (gnjana indriyas) - eye, ear, mouth, skin and nose; five motor organs (karma indiryas) - tongue, arms, feet, excrete organs and procreative organs. They are also blessed with an amazing eleventh organ called mind (manus). Here peeyaazvaar says to use the mind as the command and control center for the knowledge and motor organs and don't let the organs pull haphazardly.

For that, mind, the control center, has to have the authority and needs to issue clear commands. Authority comes from self-control and commands can be issued only after a thorough research on what is right and ethical. By putting senses in the righteous way, one avoids bad deeds. The common saying "If you put your mind to it, you can do it" emphasizes only this. If one does that, peeyaazvaar says that one can even cross seven births. The seven is just a figurative number and just simply means the ability for one to

escape the bondage (samsaara) completely.

The moral here is the control of senses, probably one of the toughest battles that one might face. It is this constant mental battle that has been mentioned widely in all our scripts anywhere from katha upanishad to Bhagavad Geetha. Conquering this internal war requires an understanding of the scripts, practice (abhyaasam), detachment (vairaagyam), and a presence within a good community (sathsangam).

You can't control the wind; but you can control your sails.

Three Minutes - 7
Relation is mutual

nin aruL enpaalathee nanRaaka
naan unnaiyinRi ileen kaNdaay
naaraNanee nii ennaiyanRi ilai.
(thirumazisaiyaazvaar, naanmukan thiruvawthaathi - 7)

நின் அருள் என் பாலதே நன்றாக
நான் உன்னையின்றி இலேன் கண்டாய்
நாரணனே நீ என்னை அன்றி இலை
(திருமழிசையாழ்வார், நான்முகன் திருவந்தாதி - 7)

naaraNanee = Lord Srimun Narayana,
nin = Your
nanRaaka = very magnificient
aruL = blessings
enpaalathee = is on me (always)
naan = I
ileen = cannot exist
unnaiyinRi = without you
nii = You (also)
ilai = cannot stay
ennaiyanRi = without me
kaNdaay = (it is) understood

This verse is sung by Thirumazisaiyaazvaar, 4th in the Aazvaar dynasty. Unlike the others, he intensely explored other philosophies before finally arriving to Srivaishnavam and realized that Lord Srimun Narayana is the sole, indisputable, and eternal authority. Here, Thirumazisaiaazvaar states that without any doubt, Lord's blessings is showered all the time. He says that he cannot exist without Him and that the Lord Himself cannot exist without the aazvaar . That is the universal truth, but he has realized this only now. NaaraNan in Tamil is the shorter from of NaaraayaNan.

Thirusmazisaazvaar, in a human form, needed and depended on the God, which is understandable to most people. But isn't it paradoxical, when he says that the Lord needs him and can't stay without him? Here lies the Srivaishnava philosophy buried implicitly in a nutshell. God is the omnipotent, singular, pervasive, eternal, and master soul (paramaatma or eswaran). Infinite number of human beings, animals, and even plants are all individual souls (jeevaatma or chit), which are also eternal. But individual souls always depend on and exist to serve the master soul, God.

The Sanskrit word NaaraayaNaa has several interpretations. Among them, two stand out significantly. First one says NaraNaam + ayanam, meaning that he is the supporter of everything in the universe. Second one is naara + ayanam, meaning that He dwells inside everything.

In aazhvaar's statement,"I am not without you", he refers to the concept that Lord is the universal supporter and that without Him, existence is meaningless. Furthermore, in his statement "You are not without me", he mentions that the Lord is inside everyone's body and that God coexists with each individual's soul. Such an intricate concept of the Lord's internal and external presence as well as the relation between Him and the individual soul is brought out so effortlessly by this aazhvaar .

By exploring the aazhvaar's Tamil works, Swami Vedanta Desikan is able to derive the meanings of convoluted concepts described in Sanskrit vedas. Both Tamil vedas and Sanskrit vedas express the same concept, but Tamil vedas state these ideas in a simple, brief and unequivocal manner. We consider both vedas as an authority and call them togther as dual (upaya) vedas.

The moral here is

1. **We need the Lord.**
   Without Him, even an atom can't move. He needs us, because we are an inseaprable part of Him and He can't shrug us.

2. **He needs us too.**
   To sing, pray, write, meditate etc. and spread his glory. Some would even jokingly say that Lord Krishna preached the Geeta and said "I am the the Lord", but only very few listened. But Andal, another aazvaar , in Her Tiruppavai said Krishna is the greatest and everyone lined up, listened, and realized. Sometimes, His devotees may have influence than He does. That also, is His wish.

Nothing ever exist entirely alone;
Everything is in relation to everything else.

Three Minutes - 8
Means and Ends

parantha sinthai onRi ninRu
ninna paatha pangkayam
nirantharam ninaippathaaka nii
ninaikka veeNdumee
(thirumazisaiyaazvaar,
thiruccantha viruththam - 101)

பரந்த சிந்தை ஒன்றி நின்று
நின்ன பாத பங்கயம்
நிரந்தரம் நினைப்பதாக நீ
நினைக்க வேண்டுமே
(திருமழிசையாழ்வார்,
திருச்சந்த விருத்தம் - 101)

sinthai = (Oh Lord ! my) thoughts
parantha = (are) spread out all over
onRi = (instead it) should focus and
ninRu = stick strongly
ninaippathaaka = and has to meditate
ninna = (on) Your
pangkayam = lotus (like)
paatha = feet,
nirantharam = permanently.
veeNdumee = (for that) the requirement
nii = (is) You
ninaikka = have to put Your mind.

Thirumazisaiyaazvaar brings out complex concepts so easily in this verse, which is his second treatise called thirucchantha viruththam in Naalayira Divya Prabhandam. He is highly focused on establishing Srimun Narayana as the sole, eternal authority above and beyond everything else (para brahmam) and this vigor is transparent throughout his creative works. Here, he begs the Lord to rescue his mind and thoughts from the worldly matters and to bless him with the ability to permanently concentrate on His lotus feet.

Aazvaar is lamenting that his fragile mind is wandering in all directions. Powerful yet cheap earthly pleasures (sapthaathy vishayangkaL) are attracting him. He, and everyone else know that, in reality, they are all spontaneous, temporary (anithyam) pleasures. Yet, however, no one can escape from them. Thus, he makes a desperate plea to the Lord to move his attention from those and to firmly concentrate only on the Lord's beautiful two lotus feet forever. He prays to Him to assure that his thoughts and the enjoyment will be eternal. That insurmountable feat can't achieved by the aazhvaar's effort, abilities, or for that matter, any one else's. It solely rests with the God. Only the Lord's desire (Bhagavad sankalpam), and nothing else, primarily determines when, where, and how one can attain this permanent pleasure.

The amazing experience (anubhavam) brought out by the aazvaar here is the realization of the Lord as both the means and ends (upaayam and upeyam). To ride on an elephant, you first need to climb on it. For that, you need the help from same elephant. First, as a means (hitham), the elephant bends down for you to climb on and

then as a result (purushaarththam), it allows you to sit on it and gives you a ride. Bending down is the means (saathanam) and giving you a ride is the rewards (saathyam).

In summary,

1. **One needs Lord's blessing even to think about Him**.
   His unconditional grace without any specific reason (nirheethukaa krupai) on the individual soul (chit) is the trigger point. Then only comes the effect of soul's accumulated good deeds and sins (karma), teachers' blessings (aachrya kadaksham), presence in a good community (sath sangam) etc.

2. **Total surrender is the best means**
   To get into the reward of meditating on Lord's feet permanently, one needs to surrender to the same feet as the means.

3. **Request utopia on earth itself**
   Scripts (vedas) proclaim, the eternals (nithyasooris) who are abode in the permanent bliss (moksha), where the concept of time is lost, look mesmerized at the Lord, even without even blinking. Aazvaar requesting that this utopia be granted to him on earth itself. We Srivaishanvavas, following his path, make the same prayer to have that enjoyment start from today and last forever.

God means (to) rewards

Note: While writing today's segment, adiyen's eyes are filled with tears on gratitude to Sri. Narayanadas (Dr. B.N. Suresh Babu's father). Many, many times adiyen had the opportunity (baghyam) of listening to his explanation on this particular verse.

Three Minutes - 9
Is anyone flawless?

paapaanaam vaa shubhaanaam vaa vadhaarhaaNaam plavangamaa
kaaryam karunNamaaryeNa na kaschid na aparaadhyati
(*Valmiki, Srimad Ramayanam, Yuddha kanatam)*

paapaanaam vaa = (even committed) profane acts
shubhaanaam vaa = (or) pious deeds
vadhaahaanaam = (or) deserve to be killed
plavangama = (hey) monkey !
karuNamaaryeNa = show sympathetic
kaaryam = action (to them)
na kaschid = (In fact,) no one (exist)
na aparaadhyati = (who has) done no crime.

After the demise of Ravana, Hanumaan, the loyal servant to Sri Rama, goes into Ashoka grove (Asoka vana) to tell the great news to Sita. There, the rakshasis, (demon women) still haven't heard about Ravana's death, continued to torture Sita. Hanumaan, witnessing that scene, gets very angry at those rakshasis. He was unable to tolerate anymore of the harm to Sita and sought Her permission to destroy them. Sita, in turn advises, "Hey Monkey, whether they have done a heinous crime or have displayed dignified character, or for that matter, even if they deserve to be killed, one who possess the righteous and noble qualities will show mercy on them. Tell me someone who hasn't committed a flaw?" Valmiki, the author of the Srimad Ramayana, implicitly brings out Sita's resentment of Hanumaan's request by calling him as a mere monkey. However, in other places, Hanuman has also been referred as a monkey supreme (vaanara sreshta). By heeding to Sita's advice, Hanumaan calmed down and refrained from causing hasty damage. Thus, the rakshasis were spared from the impending danger.

Lord Sri Rama said that he will treat himself as an ordinary human being. But many incidents in Srimad Ramayana reveal that He could not control His bubbling sympathy towards everyone; He is after all a personification of "dhaya", the quality of sympathy. This was repeatedly demonstrated in many instances - like surrendering of Kakasuran, Sugreevan, VibheshaNana.

Here, Sita also protects the rakshasis from the wrath of Hanumaan. There is one mighty difference. In the case of Sri Rama, He protected those only after they surrendered to Him. VibheshaNana and others deserted everything, realized their incapabilities, and sought refuge under the Lord's feet. Then only, the Lord provided security (rakshanaM) for them. But, Sita, surrounded by enemies, still protected the raksasis even before they made a plea to Her, even before rakshasis realized that there

is a pending threat from Hanumaan. That is the affection of the mother.

Our teachers (acharyas) were astounded by Sita's action of extreme kindness and compassion even during the continued harm. Mesmerized by that noble qualities of patience (kshamaa) and sympathy (dhaya), the acharyas praise her character in protecting all sentient (jeevatmaa) incredibly, even exceeding that of Her husband, the Lord Himself. Many consider this is one of the amazing incidents in Srimad Ramayana.

What we learn mainly from here is:

1. **Seek advice and follow.** Hanumaan sought and listened to the advice. Don't ask for the sake of it, if you are not going to follow through, then advice has no meaning.

2. **Go through proper channel.** Though, Hanumaan has the ability and willingness, he sought the permission first. Don't assume authority especially where one doesn't have any.

3. **Tackle the anger intelligently**. Sita very smartly quenched Hanumaan's anger by pointing out the reality. Jesus said a similar one "Let the one without any sins throw the first stone". Best way to shut down an anger is to separate the reality from idealism.

4. **Display good qualities.** Pardoning is a virtue . Here, Sita demonstrated an extreme case of mercy. Action is louder than words

5. **Target the cause and not the symptom**

Sita knew rakshasis were not to be blamed for their action since they are merely carrying out the orders of their master.

Compassion will cure more flaws than condemnation

Three Minutes -10
The ten commandments

Today, we will look into the commands of Bhagavad Ramanuja. Swami Ramanuja has various names: Sri Bashykaararar, Udaiyavar, Emperumaanaar, LakshamaNa muni, Yathiraajar etc. He is the divine incarnation of Adiseshan, the serpent bed for Lord Srimun Narayana in Srivaikuntam. The main reason for Ramanuja's descent to earth (avataram) was to stabilize the vedic concepts and to reestablish Srivaishnavam.

Swami Ramanuja was engaged for all of his life to prove unequivocally that Srimun Narayana is the ultimate God (Brahmam, Eswaran), that He is the sole reason (jagad kaaraNakan) for creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe (prapanjam), and that He possess infinite holy characters (ananatha kalyaaNa kuNaakaran). All sentient (chetana) and non sentient (achetana) entities form His inseparable body (saareraka saastram). The universe is real yet destroyable. The objective (purushaarththam) of any sentient is to reach the ultimate bliss (moksham), which is beyond this primordial matter (prakriti) ,and perform endless service (nithya kaimkaryam) to Srimun Narayana. For that, only two routes (upaayam) are available - devotion (bhakthi) or total surrender (prapatti), of which latter is the only plausible method for most of us. Every sentient has a right to attain moksham and enjoy performing service to the Lord (upeyam). Prapatti is the only universal method, that is applicable to anyone regardless of age, gender, race etc. There is only one eligibility criterion (adhikaaram) for prapatti: a strong desire for moksham. Once prapatti is done, then he (prapannan) has nothing more to do for moksham. Having removed all the burdens, the prapannan should live peacefully and happily for the rest of the days on earth.

When Swami Ramanuja decided that his duty was over here, and was ready to ascend back to Srivaikuntam, his disciples were all desperately crying in sorrow of the impending separation. At that time, Emperumaanar consoled them and advised to follow these ten commandments and that he will be with them in spirit all the time.

1. Thou shall not worry about soul after prapatti
2. Thou shall not worry about current karmic life after prapatti.
3. Thou shall not seek any means after prapatti for moksham
4. Thou shall help the poor.
5. Thou shall propagate Sribashyam, propagate aazvaar's works, perform service at temples, chant dvaya mantra with meaning, or at least live under the glory of a true Srivasihnavan
6. Thou shall live in a divya desam (places that aazvaars has graced)

7. Thou shall construct at least a hut and live in Thiru Naarayanapuram.
8. Thou shall live peacefully and happily.
9. Thou shall be grateful to acharya and Lord who have offloaded you
10. Thou shall serve as be a role model Srivaishnavan; show love and compassion to all, act without ego, and live with the moral support of other Sri vaishnavas.

Lets us see the brief explanation of the above.

1. Prapatti is a process of returning the stolen property (soul) to the owner(God). Prapannan (one who has performed the total surrender) has no need to worry over which he doesn't even own.
2. Current life is the effect of past sins and good deeds (karma). You have least control over it. Quit complaining or over enjoying it.
3. Prapannan has no necessity to seek other means for moksham. In fact, if you seek, then the prapatti you have done might be invalidated. (For moksham the request can be made only once and the Lord guarantees the reward. No reason to ask again).
4. Help the poor. One should help those who are in need of food, shelter, health, knowledge etc.
5. Read and propagate Sri Bashyam; if not qualified, then read and propagate aazvaar's works; if not qualified, then perform service at the temple (like cooking, cleaning, gathering flowers etc.); if not qualified for that, chant dvaya mantra with conscious mind about its meaning; if not qualified for that, at least live under the glory of a true Srivasihnavan, looking up to him as a mentor.
6. Divyadesams are the places about Aazvaars have graced their naalaayira divya prapantham. One should go and spend the rest of the days there. 106 out of 108 sthalams are on earth and available for prapannan.
7. Build, at least a small hut in Tiru Naarayanapuram (Melkot) and live there.
8. Prapaanan should live peacefully, without any doubts (nissamsayah) and happily (sukamaasvaa)
9. Prapannan should ever be grateful to the acharya who has rescued him from the glitches of birth/death cycle. He should always remember Lord's sympathy and grace towrds him.
10. Prapannan should display exemplified qualities of a Srivaishanavan. He should love all the animate and inanimate things without any animosity. Move with everyone without any self-pride. Live with the cooperation and moral support of other Sriviashnavas.

Three Minutes - 11
What does love know about sleep?

imaiyoorkaL kuzaam
thozuvathum suuzvathum sey thollai
maalaik kaNNaaraaka kaNdu
kazivathoor kaathal uRRarrkkum
uNdoo kaNkaL thunjuthalee !
(nammaazvaar, thiruviruththam - 97)

இமையோர்கள் குழாம்
தொழுவதும் சூழ்வதும் செய்
தொல்லை
மாலைக் கண்ணாரக் கண்டு
கழிவதோர் காதல் உற்றாருக்கும்
உண்டோ கண்கள் துஞ்சுதலே !
(நம்மாழ்வார், திருவிருத்தம் - 97)

imaiyoorkaL = residents of moksha
kuzzam = in groups
suuzvathum = (come and) surround
sey = (and) perform
thozuvathum = prayers (and)
kaNdu = look (mesmerized)
kaNNaaraaka = with the eyes completely filled up (with)
maalaik = Lord Srimun Narayna
thollai = (who) has no beginning.
[Similarly]
kaathal uRRarrkkum = those who are in love
kazivathoor = spend the time (on yearning).
uNdoo = is it possible
kaNkaL = (even their) eyes
thunjuthalee = close (for a second)?

This stanza (paasuram) is found in the first hymns (prabandham) sung by nammazvaar, who is regarded as the chief among the aazvaars (kkuudaSthar). nammazvaar's four prabhandams are equivalent to four Sanskrit vedas, and so he is called "vedam tamizh seytha maaRan" (Maaran who did the vedas in Tamil). Both vedas deal with the same fundamental ideas and arrive at the same conclusions that Srimun Narayana is the ultimate Lord (para tattvam). Moreover, certain Tamil verses (paasurams) are the exact translation of Sanskrit vedic verses.

The eternal bliss (moksham) is filled with ever-free (nithyasooris) and liberated (muktha) souls. They flock together and surround the Lord who is sitting in His serpent throne (Adiseshan). They praise, sing and deeply immerse in the ecstatic feeling of looking (dharsan) at the Lord eye to eye. While, enjoying this bliss, they don't even blink.

Many male aazvaars imagine themselves as a romantic lady love and Lord Srimun Narayana as the lover (naayikaa bhaaavam). Assuming they have been separated from their lover, they pour out their exasperated feelings of love, frustration and acts of desperation. Here nammaazvaar, as a girl, finds herself so restless by the separation from the Lord and compares her sleeplessness to the unwinking

devotion of the residents of moksham.

The beauty is that the Lord doesn't let you sleep while you are with Him (SamSleesha thesai) or separated from Him (viSleesha thesai). aazvaar implicitly describes how one should behave and enjoy the dharsan of the Lord. Instead of engaging in other activities, we should concentrate on the scene and retain in our minds the beautiful idol (archya moorthy) while inside the sanctum of a temple. aazvaar gives here the literal translation of Upanishad saying "sathaa pasyanthi suuraya:".

What we learn from this –

1. **Keep your eye on the ball.** Remain focused on the target until it is completely fruitful, like residents of moksham.

2. **Strive with endurance.** Invest your full effort and avoid distractions. Sleep is a metaphor for engaging in other activities.

3. **Aim high.** Don't succumb to cheap temptations. Always remember what the ultimate goal is and be aware when you are sidetracked by other diversions. Even in moksham, the target is only the best, the Lord. It's like the joke in which someone asked the robber why did you rob the bank? He replied that's where the money is.

4. **Life is short, use it wisely.** The aazvaar girl passionately tries to join with her lover, sacrificing several things including sleep. Earthly souls are separated from the Lord and permanent pleasure because of their birth/death cycle (samsaara). They should also look frantically to break that cycle, get liberated and enjoy the eternal bliss.

No gift in life will last as long,
or touch the heart as deeply
As the special privilege of ever
looking at the Lord happily.

Three Minutes - 12
Keeping up His Word

satyam vidhaatum nija
bhrritya bhaahashitam
vyaaptam cha bhuuteshu
akileshhu cha aatmanah
adrrisyata ati adbhuta
ruupam udvahan
stambhe sabhaayaam na
mrrigam na maanushham
(*Veda Vyasa, Srimad Bhagavatam 7-18-18)*

vidhaatum = to prove
bhaaashitam = the words (of)
nija bhrritya = His impeccable servant
satyam = (to be) true
cha = and
vyaaptam = the pervasion
akileshu = (amongst) all
bhuuteshhu = living things
cha = and also
aatmanah = of His
ati adbhuta = very beautiful
rupam = form
adrrisyata = (to be) seen
sabhaayaam = in the middle gathered people
stambhe = in the pillar
udvahan = was taken
na mrrigam = (which was) not an animal
na maanushham = nor a human being

This verse is in Srimad Bhagavatam, one among the eighteen puraanas (old story) composed by Sri Veda Vyasa, a celebrated seer. In this chapter, Vyasa described the Nrusimha avatara (lion faced human form of the Lord). Prahlada is a pure devotee (bhaktha) of Lord Srimun Naarayana, despite being born in the demon (raakshasa) dynasty. His father, Hiranyakasibhu, who had an awful hatred towards the Lord, tried to kill him several times. But Prahlada's devotion to the Lord was full and firm, which helped him outlive all those murderous attempts.

One day, Hiranyakasibu got so wild that he dragged Prahlada next to a pillar and questioned, "You say that your God is everywhere! Is he here in this pillar?". Prahlada politely answered "Yes, my father. He is in that pillar and for that matter He is inside every single atom". Hiranya was further enraged and used his mace in attempt to break the pillar to disprove his son. Suddenly, the Lord Nrusimha appeared with a roar. To prove the words of his devotee is true and to show his presence, the Lord made himself to appear in a beautiful form which was neither an animal nor a man from that pillar inside the King's court.

Why did the Lord appear at that time and from that pillar? Vyasa answers 1. Prahlada was tortured, but until then, he was not to put to test to demonstrate the presence of the Lord 2. Lord has to show his pervasiveness to the world and that He pervades everywhere and in anything. To show that, He could have appeared from something else, but He didn't. He came through the same pillar that

Hiranya was pointing. Both were to prove Prahlada's words are truthful. Namaazvaar brings this incident very aptly in two words - There (angku), then itself (appozuthee). As usual, azvaars comprehend complex philosophies into simple and precise Tamil words.

One may find hard to come across a puraana story that have as much beauty, conviction, and poignance like Nrusimha avatara.

What we learn from here

1. **Speak the truth and God helps you.**
   Here, Lord Lakshmi Nrusimha appeared for only one reason - a single honest soul's prayer.

2. **Be righteous and support those who are.**
   It is a moral obligation to help those who lead a virtuous life because they are just like you.

3. **Be steadfast on principle.**
   By following moral standards, one may find enemies within, like Prahlada. Even if you find opposition from your own family and friends, don't sway away from what you believe in.

4. **Believe, Lord acts unexpectedly.**
   One may question, why Lord hasn't done this, or that. He is independent and doesn't have to answer anyone to prove His power or presence. He does so whenever He finds it appropriate.

The object of a superior soul is
to speak nothing but the truth

Three Minutes -13
How do I define thee, Let me count the ways

Om
poorNamadha: poorNamidam
PoorNaath poorNam
uduchyathee |
poorNasya poorNam aadhaaya
poorNameeva avasishyathae ||
Om shanti shanti shanti
(shanthi mantra, Isaavaasaya upanishad)

adha: = That (Brahmam)
poorNam = (is) Complete
poorNam = (and is) complete
itham = here
PoorNaath = from that complete
poorNam = completion
uducchyathee = is arouse
poorNasya = From completion
poorNam = complete
aadhaaya = taken out
poorNam = (still) complete
avaasishyathae = left out
eva = only
shanti = peace

This is the Shanti mantra for Isaavaasaya upanishad. Shanti means peace and these mantras are called "Peace prayers", which are part of upanishads. They are intended to calm and relax the reciter's mind and are generally invoked at the beginning and end of any vedic ceremony to remove any obstacles. Usually chanted to create a conducive ambiance for spirituality, these can also be recited for peace in general. They all start by pronouncing "ohm" with a vibration. They all end with "shanti", repeated thrice with a peaceful pause between them.

Human beings usually face three kinds of hurdles (taapa threya). 1. Body pain such as disease, mental agony like those which are created from their own body (adhyaatmika). 2. Troubles from enemies, wild animals etc. which from the external physical world (adhi-bhautika). 3. Negative effects created by spirits, ghosts, demi-gods, and natural calamities which are classified as divine actions (adhi-daivika). So to cure diseases, to remove the influence of other souls, and planets etc., these mantras are used.

That is whole, this is whole; what has come out of the whole is also a whole; when the whole is taken out of the whole, the whole still remains the whole. The word whole here can be substituted with complete, fullness, absolute or perfect. Here, what upanishads call whole is the ultimate Lord, Brahmam. The Lord (Bhagavan) is everywhere in fullness. He is unbound and unattached. Nothing can be taken away that will make the Lord any less; nothing can be added that will make Him any more.The Lord is forever pure, independent and absolute.

This insightful statement shows the Lord's universe manifestation (visva vyapti). Sri Vishnu sahasranaamam also starts with "ohm Visvam Vishum". Think for

a moment, is there anything in the world after you part some, you end up with more? Food, clothing, money? None of them. Probably love or devotion is the answer. And that is why God is realized through love and deep devotion (bhakthi).

Though God is beyond any word or any one's mind, vedas might have given the world, the original, oldest, most profound philosophical characterization of God. What we learn from here-

1. God is beyond comprehension
Scripts don't justify His true nature or power. They can paint only a minuscule sample of the whole.

2. Nothing is permanent except God and the love towards Him.
Obviously, anything permanent never gets affected; It is unattached.

3. Understanding our limited scope of knowledge.
We are all used to common sense, cause and effect phenomena, mathematical calculations etc. When they all fail in describing God, we realize how tiny our rational mind and theoretical wisdom actually is. These vedic scripts teach one to be more humble.

He is infinite. You are in finite.
Difference is the space (prakriti).

Three Minutes - 14
Better than the real thing?, think again!

iinRooL irukka manai niiraati
(nammaazvaar, tiruvaasiriyam - 6)

ஈன்றோள் இருக்க மணை நீராட்டி
(நம்மாழ்வார், திருவாசிரியம் - 6)

iinRooL = (When) the mother who gave birth
irukka = is there
niiraati = (why perform) shower (and rituals)
manai = (for a) wooden plank ?

Nammaazvaar, fifth in the aazvaar (Sriviashnava saints) dynasty, has composed four hymns (prabhandams). In the first one, aazvaar was praising Lord Vishnu from his deep, devotional state (parabhakthi) and was praying for the liberation (moksham) from the bondage (samsaara). The Lord's intention was to keep the aazvaar on earth for some more time to perform good deeds for the world through him.

The Lord showed him internally of His innate nature (svarupa), form (rupa), qualities (guna) and His wealth (vibhuthi). Aazvaar, in ecstatic wise mood (paragnana), sings this poem (prabhandam). This is written more like a prose and reads very easily; it is considered to be equivalent to yajur veda and is impregnated with the rich meanings of the word "Narayana".

This verse says, "why recite prayers to a wooden plank, when one's own mother, who gave birth to him, is available?" Aazvaar depicts the olden day custom of substituting a wooden blank when the real thing is not available. Note that the real mother who gave birth is mentioned specifically because the one who had painstakingly carried for ten moths with all the sacrifices has more bondage to the child than anyone else.

Exploring the the inner meaning, (svaapatheesam), the comparison of mother here is the simile used for Lord Srimun Narayana. He is the root cause (aadhi) for everything. He is the one who created everything and delegated the responsibility to others and at the dissolution of the universe, he carries all the sentient (chetana) and non sentient (achetana) in his stomach. When one realizes this, why would one go and pray to other demi-gods? That is similar to rushing out and signing up for volunteering social service while ignoring one's own elderly mother who desperately needs help.

As usual, the aazvaar demonstrates the mastery of compressing the essence of scripts (shruthi, smirithi etc.) in a couple of Tamil words. Upanishads (the prime part of vedas) say "maathru devoo bhava". It means "Regard your mother as God". Then only It

mentions the father, teacher, and guest. A Tamil proverb says mother and father are the direct Gods in front you .

The moral here is - mother is used as a metaphor for Lord Srimun Narayana, the true mother and protector for all.

1. **Go for the real.**
   Ignore the fake, pseudo, or substitute. All that glitters is not gold.

2. **Truth may easier than you imagine.**
   Just like mother, it is ignored without realizing the greatness or happiness it can bring.

3. **Don't be myopic, but look for permanence.**
   Truth is the only one that is permanent. An example of this permanence is the mother's sacrifice, which proves her love and care, which is time-tested and always pure. Compare sugar and aspartame. The negative effect of sugar is small and well-publicized, but do you know the long term effects of aspartame or other substitutes?

Why throw away the diamond
in the hand
And dig for the pebbles in the
beach sand?

Three Minutes -15
Who is bigger, You or me?

puviyum iru visumpum
ninnakaththa * nii en
seviyin vazi pukunthu en
uLLaay - avivu inRi
yaan periyan nii periyai
enpathanai yaar aRivaar?
uunparuku neemiyaay! uLLu
(nammaazvaar, periya tiruvanthaati - 75)

புவியும் இரு விசும்பும்
நின்னகத்த × நீ என்
செவியின் வழி புகுந்து என்
உள்ளாய் × அவிவு இன்றி
யான் பெரியன் நீ பெரியை
என்பதனை யார் அறிவார்?
ஊன்பருகு நேமியாய் உள்ளு
(நம்மாழ்வார், பெரிய திருவந்தாதி - 75)

neemiyaay! = (Oh Lord!, Who holds) the disc
uunparuku = (that) eats the flesh (of the enemies) !
puviyum = This world
iru visumpum = (and) Srivaikuntam
ninn akaththa = are all due to Your will
nii en = That magnificient You
seviyin vazi pukunthu = has gone through my ear
en uLLaay = and staying inside me,
avivu inRi = without leaving me for a moment
[Now]
uLLu = Think for a moment!
yaan periyan = (truthfully) Am I big?
nii periyai = or You the big one?
enpathanai yaar aRivaar? = Who knows?

This verse (paasuram) is found in the third hymn (prabhandam) called Periya Thiruvandaadi, authored by Namaazvaar. He brings out the conundrum of bigness between him and the Lord.

Oh Lord (Srimun Narayana)! You are holding the disc (Sudarsana) which devours the flesh of all the enemies. This world (bhu and other lokams) and other worlds (Srivaikuntam) act at Your will (sankalpam). You, thus displaying Your lordship over everything. Though your bigness is an irrefutable truth, how come You have entered into me through my auditory abilities and stay inside me, refusing to leave even for a second? Now, think for a moment about this paradox, who is really bigger You or me?

Lord has everything under his support, control, and ownership. This applies to earth (prakrithi related) and moksham (aprakritham). The question is, Who is bigger? The Lord, who holds everything inside Him or the Aazvaar who Holds that Lord Himself in him?

On the outset this may look silly, saying that the aazvaar who is an ordinary human being claims that is bigger than the Lord. Is his statement is like Ravana, Kamsa and other demons based on ego and

hatred (bhagavad dhuveesham) towards Lord? No. aazvaar politely (saatvika ahangaaram) remarks that he is bigger because he is His devotee and that the Lord has given everything to him. This is like President, who comes home, bends down, and yields to his small grandchild who sits on his grandfather's back, like a horse ride.

Here, Aazvaar brings out the finest of Lord's qualities (kalyaana gunaas) in a nutshell. Lord has everything, but for who? He gives all his body (deham), his form (rupam), his weapons (aayudham), his wealth (aiswaryam) to His devotees to enjoy eternally. He says that actually He doesn't own anything; everything including the Lord Himself, is owned by them.

The moral here is the concept of reciprocity.

1. Reciprocate.
Love, affection, giving, sharing, helping all these qualities needs to be reciprocated. One way doesn't flourish too long.

2. Look at the intent and not the value .
What we offer to Lord is such a tiny amount of something but He is prepared to give the entire universe to us. We learn from that and extend our giving to His children, everyone.

3. Show humility.
aazvaar claims that he is big, with an attitude extreme humility. In giving don't patronize yourself. In receiving, don't assume you deserve it.

It is not taking, but giving that makes one richer.
That is why God is the richest.

Three Minutes - 16
A loyal servant

nivaasa SayyaaSana
paathukamusuko-
padhaana varshaatapa
vaaraNaathibhi:
Sariira bhethaiS tava
seshatham gathair
yathoochitham Seesha
ithriiyatee janai:
(Swami Alavandar,
Stotraratnam - 40)

nivaasa = (Assumes the form of) residence
Sayyaa = soft bed
aSana = beautiful throne
paathukaa = nice footwear
amusuka = garments
upathaana = pillow
vaaraNa = umbrella,
varshaathapa = (to protect from) rain and sun light
aathipi = more and more
Sariira = of forms
bhethaiS = (with) a variety of
tava = of You
seshatam = being as supplies
kathair = attained
yatha = as
ucitam =pleasingly appropriate
Seesha = servant
ithriiyatee = this is called
janai: = by people

This verse is found in Stotraratnam composed by Yamunaachaar, commonly known as Swami Alvandar. Five of Alavandar's disciples later went on to become Swami Ramanuja's teachers (aacharya). Alavandar is considered to be one of the foremost aacharyaas in the Srivaishava lineage. He firmly believed and spread the idea of service to the Lord (kaimkaryam) as the only ultimate goal (purushaartham) and total surrender (prapatti) is the only plausible means (upaayam), which liberate one from the bondage of birth/death cycle (samsaara)

Here, Alavandar describes the service rendered by Anantha (Adhi Seshan), usually denoted as Lord's serpent bed. The name sesha perfectly suits him. Why? The definition of Sesha is "one whose existence is merely for the service to another". No one can ever serve the Lord as much or as close as him. He transforms himself into to that serviceable form; as a home, bed, throne, sandals, clothing, pillow, umbrella, and other material to protect Srimun Narayana from water, sun and and other elements. He is not separated from the Lord by time (kaala), space (desa), or state (avasthai). The Adhi Sesha is like a shadow who waiting eagerly to perform the service.

Eternals (nithyasooris) who reside in Srivaikuntam have no attachment to accumulated deeds (karma). They stay ever in their abode of Srivaikuntam and are beyond birth/death cycles (samsaara) like us. They are called bond-free. Even among them, Anantha is mentioned first before anyone else; like Lord's vehicle bird (Garuda), Lord's chief operating officer (Vishvaksena). You may ask why such an high honor is given to him? Alavandar describes here that

because you can't separate Anantha from the Lord. Whatever the Lord wants to do, Anantha changes himself immediately to that posture and serves Him. When the Lord descends down to the earth, Anantha accompanies Him. When Lord came as Rama and Krishna, he too came down as Lakshmana and Balarama. In Nrusimha avatara, Anantha was serving as Lord's sandals (paduka) and so on. Poigai aazvaar (first Sri Vaishanava saint) has composed a similar verse in Tamil (senRaal kuDaiyaam..).

There is a story about Rama that when Rama was born He was crying continuously to the point that no one could pacify Him. All the doctors, nurses, maids tried to no avail. Finally they called the guru Vasishta. Vasishta looked for a moment and said, "This is easy. Bring the Lakshmana and put next Rama in his crib. Rama's problem is separation from Anantha". Baby Rama stopped crying once Lakshmana was next to him. Thus Ananatha gives the true meaning for "through thick and thin".

What we learn from here

1. **True servitude is void of any self-emotion or self-use.**

   No point in saying "adiyen" or "daasan" without following what it entails.

2. **Service should be in all time, place and state.**

   Don't restrict yourself serving the parents or elders at certain times only. Don't be afraid; True bhagavathas, as receivers of your service, will always look ahead and won't do anything to hurt you or your things.

3. **Take pride in service.**

   It is not a menial task; It takes great honor, a great mind to bend down.

Only a life lived for others
is a life worthwhile.
(Albert Einstein)

Three Minutes - 17
Say it with Less

Icchaa miina vihaara kacchapa mahaa
pootrin yadruccaa hare
rakshaa vaamana rosha raama karuNaa
kaakutStha helaa halin |
kriiddaa vallava kalka vaahana dasaa
kalkin iti pratyaham
jalpantah purushaa punanti bhuvanam
puNyaugha paNyaapanaah ||
(Swami Desikan, Dashaavathaara storam)

Icchaa miina = Self-willed fish
vihaara kacchapa = playful tortoise
mahaa pootrin = gigantic wild booar
yadruccaa hare = Spontaneously lion
rakshaa vaamana = protecting Vamana
rosha raama = indignant Raama
karuNaa kaakutStha = mercy and kindness filled kakustha clan
helaa halin = plough-weilder
kriiddaa vallava = executor of impossible tasks
kalka vaahana = rider on a white horse
dasaa = ten
kalkin iti pratyaham =
jalpantah = mutter (blabber)
purushaa punanti bhuvanam
puNyaugha paNyaapanaah

Swami Vedanta Desikan, most likely, is the most supreme preceptor (aacharyaa) of the Sri Vaishanava tradition (sampradayam). He is the epitome of knowledge (gnjana), detachement (vairaagya), devotion (bhakthi), and adherence to the Sri Vaishnava scripts (saastra anushaatanam). He has contributed enormously in multiple languages. This Dashaavatatra stotra is one of the gems, which describes a salutation to each of the ten incaranations (avataras) of the Lord. Swami Desika composed this while he was worshipping in the dashaavataara sanctum (sannidhi) in Sriranagam.

In this verse (sloka), Swami Desikan precisely puts all ten avataaras in less than a single verse. For each avatara he gives exactly one adjective that best describes that incaranation.

Lord's incaranations have been enumerated as ten by aazvaars. He appeared as a 1. Fish in his first avatara, 2. Tortoise to have fun 3. Huge wild boar 4. Nrusimha (man-lion form) when no one (including himself) expected. 5. Vaamana, whose only objective is to protect (rakshaa) those who surrender to Him. 6. Angry Paarasuraama 7. Rama, the ocean mercy and kindness 8. Balaraama with a plough 9. Krishna, a player (leela) with everyone as a cow-herd (idaiyan) and finally, 10. Kalki, the rider on a white horse, who has yet to make his appearance. Even those who simply blabber these avatara names will make the world holy. They are like streets of warehouses filled with good deeds (punyaas).

Now let us see how those adjectives aptly suit each avatara.

1. Lord came down first on His own wish (sankalpam). He is independent and need not obey anyone. Thus, Icha fits nicely to describe the reason for incarnation.
2. Lord did everything sportively - churning the milk ocean (paarkadal), as a bewitching girl (mohini avatara) etc.
3. The wild boar is huge with a single horn. Besides He preached as Varaaha (boar) the final hymn (charama sloka) to earth goddess (Bhu devi), He lifted the entire universe with a single horn. What else can describe other than great (maha)
4. The magnifcience of Nrusmiha avatara is a sudden explosion. He instantly appeared at time that no one expected. The term yadrucha means spontaneous or without any indication.
5. Vaamana avatara is the only avataara without any killing. He protected friends (Indra and devaas) and even the enemy (Maha Bali) and changed his mind as well. He stamped the entire universe with His holy feet. Protector means Vamana.
6. Parasuraama is analogous to anger. He beheaded his own mother by listening to his father's words and vowed to wipe out warrior class (kshatriya kulam) entriely. Rosha here means indignant.
7. Rama avatara is the very personification of kindness. You can see it in every instant.
8. Balarama always had the plough. It was inseparale from him
9. Krishna means play (leela). What other word would describe better
10. Finally, Kalki reminds us immediately of a white horse.

One can benefit a lot by studying Swami Desika's style and insight, especially in this verse. Try to adopt some when you write an essay, letter or give a speech.

1. Target brevity; Less is more (although this may be difficult)

2. Use appropriate words. Understand the whole and choose the most appropriate. (like multiple choice questions)

3. More on preparation and less on execution.
   Desikan was constantly contemplating about the Lord through scripts, aacharya advice, meditation etc. He was filled with knowledge and when the time came, everything poured out so nicely and easily.

Wise men speak because they have something to say, Fools speak to just say something.
(Plato)

Three Minutes - 18
When one equals to everything

Kaamahaa kaamakruth kaantha kaama kaamapradha prabhu. (32)
kaamadeva kaamapaala kaami kaantha krutha aagamaa (70)
(Bhiishma, Sri Vishnu Sahasranaamam)

Kaamahaa = one who destroys all desires
kaamakruth = one who satisfies the wishes
kantha = one who has a charming form
kaama = one who is lovable (desired by everyone)
kaamapradha = grantor of wishes (supplies all the desired objects)
prabhu = Lord, master, controller, owner

kaamadeva = One who grants all desires
kaamapaala = one who is the protector of bestowed gifts
kaami = one who is the desirable one
kaantha = one who has an enchanting form
kruthaagama = Revealer of mantras

Sri Vishnu Sahasranaama (Vishnu's thousand names) is a popular stotra consisting of 108 verses (slokas) [excluding the preamble and the end prayers]. This was recited by Bhiishma in the ithihaasa (ancient epic) Mahabharatha. Bhiisma was defeated by Arjuna and was lying in his arrow bed (saratharpa), waiting for the last moment. Lord Krishna unfolds himself into universal form (vishwaroopam) and it is then Bhiisma who recites this sacred hymn. Bhiisma advised everyone to pray to the ultimate Lord (para brahmam) to get rid of all the sorrow in one's life. Many teachers (aacharyaas) have written commentaries that lean towards their own philosophical views.

The Lord removes bad desires. He is the creator, granter, supplier, and protector of desirable things. He is the Supreme and the most enchanting. He is the revealer of the sacred texts in order to guide everyone. He grants all the four types of objectives: righteousness, wealth, pleasure, and ultimate bliss (dharma, artha, kaama, moksha). He gives and protects these objectives. Lord Krishna said the same in Bhagavad Gita - "yoga kshemaam" (yogam = wealth, kshemam= protection of that) . Lord is the reveler of sacred mantras. He has instructed the pancaraatra agamas and spread the holy scripts/other authoritative texts (vedas and other pramaaNams). The First yuga called Krutha has emerged from Him.

Let us organize all these ideas. Lord is

1. **Destroyer** - destroys the useless desires.

2. **Creator** - creates all the desirable things

3. **Owner** - has unlimited supply.

4. **Deliverer** - fulfiller of desires.

5. **Protector** - grants, delivers and then protects them.

6. **Lovable form** - assumes an enchanting form so that people are pleased to approach Him.

7. **Authority** - He is the Lord and surpasses everyone and no need to ask anyone.

8. **Attractor of minds** - He has the power to attract every one's mind and put in the right desires.

9. **Complete** - He is complete (poorNam) and fully satisfied. No point in approaching someone who himself is subordinate. Lord's supply will never reduce when He gives to others.

10. **Easily accessible** - He is bright and present everywhere. No need to search where can we find Him

11. **Guide** - Lord, through authoritative texts, shows the means to fulfill our desires

12. **Supreme** - He is the final. Brahma, yugas, sastraas emerged only from Him. Everything can be obtained from Him.

What we learn from here

1. **"Giving" is a simple term.** But it is associated with all the above circumstances. It has to be synchronized with mind, word and action. (mano, vaak, kaayai). Don't promise things that you can't control.

2. **Watch out for "Buck stops here " statement.** Convince yourself when someone says " I will take care", how much they can execute.

3. **Go for the best.** When you have the ultimate Lord, why go for lower demi-Gods? When you know and assured about ultimate bliss (moksha), you don't need to try desperately for other things.

If you desire many things,
many things will seem but a few
(Benjamin Franklin)

[Note: Few finally shrinks to one, and that is the ultimate bliss (moksham).]

Three Minutes - 19
Sinners can be winners too

sriman naama prochya
naaraayaNaakhyam
ke na prabhur vaanchitham
paapino api
ha nah puurvam vaak pravritta
na tasmims
tena praaptam garbha
vaaSaadi duhkham
(Kulasekara aazvaar,
Mukunda maala - 26)

ke = who,
api = even
paapino = sinners
prochya = (by) saying it out aloud
sriman = the blessed
naama = name
naaraayaNa-akhyam = called Naaraayanaa
na prabhur = did not get fulfilled
vaanchitham = their own desires
[but]
ha = oh!
nah = We
puurvam = (in) earlier (lives and)
pravritta = deeds (karma)
vaak = (used the) speech
na tasmims = not in that way.
tena = Hence
duhkham = (the) misery
vaaSaadi = (of) residing
garbha = (in the) womb
praaptam = (is what we have) achieved

Mukundamaala, composed by Kulasekara aazvaar is one of the most celebrated hymns of deep devotional outcry (bhakthi paravasam) offered as a garland (maala) of verses to Lord Krishna. These prayer songs are simply elegant and open up the heart of King Kulasekara, a fervent devotee of Sri Vaishnava tradition (sampradayam). The total number of verses (slokas) vary from 40 to 53, depending on the source.

Even those who have committed the most cruel sins are pardoned and blessed with their desires, just by shouting out the name of Lord Sriman Naaraayana. If so, why are we still suffering by living in the womb and going through the birth /death cycles? It could have been a result of not chanting that power speech in our earlier lives. What a pity!

Here, Aazvaar brings out the glory of pronuncing the Lord's name (Bhagavad naama sankeertanam). He specifically stresses the benefit of reciting the eight lettered mantra (ashtaakshara mantra) and the losses in not doing so. King Kulasekara reiterates what other traditional holy scripts have been emphasizing all along.

Srimad Bhagavatam describes the story of Ajamilan. Though he was not pious through out most of his life, in the last minute on his deathbed, while shouting out at his son, he indirectly referred the Lord's name and so received the blessings. Other aazvaars also claimed such magnanimous effects of this mantra. "naan kaNdu koNdeen naaraayaNaa ennum naamam" (I figured out the name of Naaraayanan), "moytha valvinaiyuL

muunRu ezuthu udaiya peeraal" (within all this sad karma, with the three worded mantra) etc. Swami Desikan says even if one blabbers (jalpantha) Lord's name, it is good enough; the Lord knows your intent. Along these lines, Kulasekara aazvaar says, all you have to do is to make an attempt.

What we learn from here

1. No need to be sad about the past. Anyone can be a better person starting from today. Lord loves every single thing no matter they are good or bad.

2. Understanding about oneself is half the solution. If accidentally pronouncing Lord's name can bring such a return, imagine what would happen if one puts the mind into the Lord.

3. 3Rs - Repent, Reform, Rejoice. Understand the mistakes, take a vow not to repeat them; enjoy each day thinking about the Lord; Also, be grateful to what He has already blessed on you.

4. Chanting purifies the mind and induces calmness. Their influence is beyond spiritual life. Start chanting simples names of the Lord - Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Naarayanaa etc. There is no need to chant complex mantras. He will guide you.

Large streams flow from
little fountain
Tall oaks grow from
little acorns

Three Minutes - 20
The path to the tower of wisdom

ennuyir thandhu aLitthavaraich
charaNam pukki
yaan adaivee avar gurukkaL
nirai vaNanghi
(Swami Desikan,
adhikaara Sangkraham - 3)

என் உயிர் தந்து அளித்தவரைச்
சரணம் புக்கி
யான் அடைவே அவர் குருக்கள்
நிறை வணங்கி

yaan = I
charaNam = surrender
pukki = (and) take refuege
thandhu = (to those) who have given
aLitthavarai = and blessed
ennuyir = my life;
avar gurukkaL = and to their teachers
nirai = (their teachers ...) in that order
adaivee = reach out
vaNanghi = (and) pray (to them)

Swami Vedanta Desikan. remembering the aazvaar's (Srivaishanava saints) gift of Tamil vedas to all humankind, paid homage back to them in composing enormous amount of Tamil hymns (Sri Desika Prabhandam). These Tamil verses compete equally with his Sanskrit hymns in style, philosophical concepts, and flow. Swami Desikan's compositions can be remembered via a simple pneumonic: ABC (accuracy, brevity and colorfulness). They reflect the true meanings of the scripts (vedas and smrithis) as propagated by previous teachers (poorvaacharya) in Srivaishanava tradition (sampradaayam). These works are small enough to make the meaning clearer, while the phoentics (flow, rhyme, tune) reflect the context and form a mesmerizing musical enchantment.

This particular verse is in addhikaara sangraham, which is a collection of Tamil verses from his magnum opus Srimad Rahasya Threya Saaram (Essence of three secret mantras). Swami so precisely details the aacharya lineage order, an holy chain that one should always think of. First, he starts with those who gave life:

Giving life can be interpreted as

1. Physical life. the natural parents who gave birth to the body.

2. Scriptual life. the guru and Gayatri mantra, which provided the eligibility to learn the scripts through the thread cremeony (upanayanam)

3. Sri Vaishanava life. Aacharya and Sriman Narayana blessings with a Srivaishanava life through five holy rituals (panca samskaaram)

4. Liberated life. the Aacharya and the Lord rescue of the lost soul from the bondage (samsaara) to perform eternal service (nithya kaimkaryam) through total surrender (prapatti). There are "no more births".

First, surrender to those who gave the life. Then, prostrate (fall flat in front of them) and pray to them. Afterwards, proceed in the order of one's teacher, one's teacher's teacher etc.. . Finally, the unbroken holy chain ends with Sri Mahalakshmi and Sriman Narayanan. Thus, the lineage of preceptors (guru parampara) is very important. It is only with the contact and guidance of the teacher (aacharya sambandham) that allows our soul to become enlightened (removal of aggnjana) and purified (samskaara).

What we learn from this.

1. Gratitude. What the aacharyaas formally learnt by going through rigourous studies, they have kindly instructed us with that knowledge, through minimal effort on our part. One can't even imagine the value of them or repaying a tiny token in reciprocation. The least we can do is being grateful.

2. Order (kramam) is crucial. Even in daily life, no one likes to bypass the lower level and approach higher authority.

3. Spread the sampradaayam. By watching and listening to the aacharyas, one would also get inspired in contributing. The best help would be spreading the knowledge and the aacharya's fame.

4. Take pride and respect the previous teachers' (poorvaacharya) path. They are like a super market of knowledge and we can get anything in one short trip. Why go and construct a new road, when the easy and proven expressway is already available?

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference
(Robert Frost)
[Note: Less traveled is the elders' path, since many shy away.]

Three Minutes - 21.
Life is short.
Pray Him hard.

minnin nilai ila mann uyir aakkaikaL
ennumidaththu iRai unnummin niiree
(Nammazvaar, Tiruvaaymozi 1-2-2)

மின்னின் நிலை இல மன் உயிர் ஆக்கைகள்
என்னுமிடத்து இறை உன்னுமின் நீரே

aakkaigaL = the body (sareeram)
mann = (of) earthly
uyir = living things
ila = is not (even equal to that)
nilai = (state or) life of
minnin = a lightening
ennumidaththu = If so,
niiree = You all,
unnumin = meditate deeply (on the)
iRai = Lord who is the protector

Swami Nammaazvaar is called Vedam Tamil seytha maaran (Maaran who did the vedas in Tamil) because he gave the four vast and complex vedas in four short and sweet Tamil prabhandams. Among them the final hymn (charama prabhandam) is Tiruvoimozhi which is regarded as the essence of saama veda. In this particular verse, Namaazvaar is preaching (upadesam) to take the refuge at the Lord's lotus feet immediately. He makes it lucid by giving a comparison of lightning (minnal) to the lives of all sentient (chetana).

Visishta advatitam (qualified nondualism), the Srivaishanava school of philosophy as propagated by Swami Ramanuja, is based on three distinct realities: (Tattva threyam) - sentient (chetana or jeevatma), non sentient or matter (achetana or prakriti), and Lord (Esvara or paramaatma). First, we must understand that the individual souls are different from the temporary body where they reside in. The body is a matter like a piece of wood. The soul (atma) enters the body at birth and leaves at death, yet it remains unchanged before and after it enters the body.

Lord Krishna, in Bhagvad Gita, says that a soul never dies, but the body does. The soul wears bodies like a person wears clothes, getting into a new dress and discarding the old ones. The dress that the soul wears next depends on the wardrobe, which in turn, depends on what is already bought and stored based on the soul's affordability and taste.

The law of accumulated reaction to activities (karma) dictates the path of the souls. The type of body and the quality of life is determined on the accumulated pious deeds (punya) and sinful actions (papa). That is the generalization of the perpetual birth/death cycle (samsaara). For bacteria, the life is in terms of minutes, for human beings its around 100 years. One can't even imagine the number of lives one

might have had since the dawn of he universe, let alone the universe itself being created and destroyed infinitely.

Karma is generated only in human life and so, humans need to lead life responsibly. They should be able to distinguish between temporary items (anithya vasthu) and permanent values (nithya vasthu). Due to this illusion (maaya, bramai), the soul becomes deeply attached to the body and mistakenly identifies itself as the body. Because of this erroneous identity (sareera athma bramam), soul is clouded with the body's pleasures. In that process, the soul gets entangled with various vices causing it to commit more sins and thus, entraps itself into further bondage.

Here, aazvaar hints that our life is just speck in the total time spectrum. Lightning is so bright, powerful, and jolting. But, how long is its life? Our life span is also similarly tiny. As Kulasekara aazhvaar put it, by our mere presence on this earth is sufficient proof that in the last birth (janma) we didn't recite Lord's name (Bhagavad naama). Think for a moment, that you are reading this now because of your wardrobe (karma) and taste (spiritual interest).

Naamazvaar says, while you still have that conscious mind, make use of your current human life! Meditate deeply and take refuge at the lotus feet of Simun Naaraayanaa. In the case of lightning, you know its life span, but no one knows about our length of stay on this earth.

In summary,

1. **Body and soul are different**. Body is engaged with sensuous pleasures, while the soul craves for the service to the Lord.

2. **Life is too short** to be wasted on useless things. Hold on to the Lord's feet, immediately.

3. **Cultivate the spiritual mindset**. One may try to postpone the meditation on the Lord, but there is no guarantee of life or mindset afterwards.

4. **Discriminative knowledge** on permanent and temporary pleasures is essential (nithya anithya vasthu vivekam). Concentrate on eternal happiness (mukti) rather than temporary pleasure (bhukti).

Catch, then, oh catch the transient hour;
Improve each moment as it flies;
Life's a short summer, man a flower;
He dies - alas how soon he dies.
(Samuel Johnson)

Three Minutes - 22.
The smart choice is right in front of you!

Devu maRRu aRiyeen kuruhuur nambi
paavin innisai paadith thirivanee
(Madhura Kaviyaazvaar,
kanninun shiruttambu - 2)

தேவு மற்று அறியேன் குருகூர் நம்பி
பாவின் இன்னிசைப் பாடித் திரிவனே

Nambi = (Other than) nammazvaar (from)
kuruhuur = the town of Tirukkurukoor,
aRiyeen = (I am not) not aware of
maRRu = another
Devu = God.
thirivanee = (I will) spend all my life
paadith = by singing
innisai = the melodious music
paavin = of the hymns (of nammaazvaar)

Madhurakavi (sweet poet) aazvaar, an ardent disciple, is the one who collected all the outpourings of his aacharya namaazvaar's verses as it came through his mouth. Also, Madhurakavi wrote 11 verses called Kanninun shirtutaambu, which is the crown jewel of aachaarya bhakthi (deep devotion and contemplation about the teacher or guru). History reveals that Naathamuni, a principal aacharya in Srivaishanva sampradaayam (tradition), in search of the lost Naalaayira Divya Prabhandam (4000 hymns composed by aazvaars), recited Kanninun Shirtutaambu many times and received the dharsan (appearance) of Namaazvaar and was blessed with the lost prabhandam. Many recite this hymn to find any lost items and to improve memory etc.

Madhurakavi Aazvaar, says here that his guru, Namaazvaar, is the only God for him and that he will not seek any other; he will spend his life in singing the sweet music of Namaazvaar's hymns. Madhurakavi is an exception, as he is the only Aazvaar who hasn't written any specific hymn about the Lord, but restrained himself to compose only on his aachaarya. "Even in forgetfulness, Madhurakavi will never even seek another God (maRanthum maRRu devu aRiyeen yennum Madhurakavi)" praised Swami Desikan.

Madhurkavi was born in an higher caste, well trained in all saastrams (scripts), a gifted musical poet, and was elder to Nammaazvaar. Despite of this, he still took refuge at the feet of Namaazvaar, who is the avataara (descent) of Vishvakesena, the Lord's chief operating officer at Srivaikuntam (eternal bliss). Even more amazing, Madhura kavi sought only namaazvaar as the guru and redeemer, although he could have sought Lord Krishna (who instructed Bhagavad Gita), who was still on this earth via his vibhava avatara (manifested descent). He was so much enthralled by the kalyaana

gunaas (noble characters) of his guru more than the Lord's Himself!

Nammaazvaar, once, while depicting the saulabhyam (easy accessibility) of the Lord, could not control his emotions and fainted. That was the extent of his captivated love (moham) with Lord Krishna and is reflected so vividly in his verses. But, Madhurakavi, unlike his guru, was not immersed in the bhakthi peru veLLam (devotional floods) with Krishna; not even on His divya mangala thirumeeni (supreme, beautiful body); not on the nammazvaar verses which mesmerizingly describe about that Krishna; but just only on the sweet music (innisai) of those hymns, that's what he was fascinated with.

Aacharya is the one who removes the agnjana (ignorance), opens the wisdom eye, and show the Lord to the disciple; so he is more vital than the Lord himself, according to the saastras (scripts) and sampradaya (tradition). He is the preceptor and is crucial link between the jeevaathma (an individual soul) and the paramaathmaa (Lord). To attain moksham (the permanent bliss), two means are possible, namely bhakthi (extreme devotion and incessant contemplation) and prapatti (total unconditional surrender), the latter is the one which is more probable by commoners.

For Prapatti, aacharya is the inevitable intermediary and without him, breaking away from bondage is nearly impossible. Aaccording to Swami Desikan, Madhurakavi avoided any harm (thunbhu aRRa Madhura kavi) by surrendering to his aachaarya. One may infer that such an escape from harm may not be possible, even if one surrenders to the Lord Himself.

What we learn here -

1. **Achaarya is the direct God** (pratyaksha deivam), who exhibits a greater accessibility than the Lord himself.

2. **Surrendering to aachrya does not contradict saastras or sampradayam;** it does not refute the paratattvam of Sriman Naraayana (final and all powerful Lord) as well.

3. **By pleasing the aachrya, Lord is pleased even more**. So acharya bhakthi should see no bounds

4. **Surrendering to aachaya is more fruitful** than surrendering to the Lord Himself, and in almost all instances that is the only method possible.

He showed the path, with a kinder heart;
Helpless in me, put an humble thought;
Can't ever thank, even God tries hard;
All I can is, cherish him over the Lord.

Three Minutes - 23. Lamenting like a bird lost in the high seas

engum pooyk karai kaaNaathu
eRi kadal vaay meendeeyum
vangattin koompu eeRum
maappaRavai poonReenee
(Kulasekaraazvaar, Perumal Tirumozhi 5-5)

எங்கும் போய்க் கரை காணாது
எறி கடல் வாய் மீண்டேயும்
வங்கத்தின் கூம்பு ஏறும்
மாப்பறவை போன்றேனே

poonReenee = (I am) like that
maappaRavai = huge bird (which)
eengkum pooy = wandered everywhere (but)
karai kaaNaathu = could not find the shore
eRi kadal vaay = (of that) high sea
meendeeyum = (so) once again (returned back to)
eeRum = climb
koompu = the main mast
vangattin = of the ship

Kulasekara Aazvaar, a King from Kerala, longed for the spiritual union with the Lord and transformed himself to be a royal saint. He and Periyaazvaar (Vishnuchittar) are the only two who offered a garland of verses (paamaalai) and their daughters to wed Lord Srimun Naarayanaa. King Kulasekara composed Perumaal Tirumozhi in Tamil and Mukundamaala in Sanskrit. He has done mangalaasaasanam (sing in praise of local deities) of only a few places. In this padhikam (decad of 10 verses), he laments about his helplessness and make a total surrender to Uyyavanda Perumaal (Lord who came to enrich) of Tiruvittuvakkodu, depicted through amazing similes. He is making saranagathy with such a meek tone and says even if the Lord disowned him, he will never leave him simply because He is the only savior.

In this particular verse, aazvaar compares him to a bird lost in the high seas. A bird that wanted to cross the ocean to reach the shore on the other side, initially was smart enough to climb the main mast of the ship and stay on it. But, in the middle of the journey, it thought that the destination was nearby and trusted its instincts to find the place, abandoning the ship and flew away. After many attempts to reach the destination, it realized that it could not do it alone. Thus, it humbly returned back to the old place, the main mast of the ship.

The inner meaning (svaapadeesam) here relates to Prapatti, the total unconditional surrender to the Lord. Here is the comparison:

1. Huge Bird = ego filled individual souls [chetanas]
2. High sea = samsaara saagaram (bondage of birth/death cycle ocean) [samsaara]
3. Ship = Bhagavan Srimun Naarayanaa (Esvara)
4. Main mast = Aacharya identified thorugh his tridhandam (Aaacharya)
5. Shore = moksham and other incidental earthly rewards [Moksham]
6. Bird's search in locations = expecting help from others [anya gathi]

7. Bird's own attempts = ego-centric karma, gnajna, bhakthi yogas [anya upaayam]

8. Returning = Renouncing other means [ananya gathi, ananya saranam]

9. Sit back = be humble and realize utter helplessness [kaarpanyam]

10. and wait = Perform Prapatti and enjoy the rest of life [maha viswaasam]

The Sea and Ship have been common analogies used in scripts. Individual souls are like birds entrapped in samsaara that are cluelessly wandering everywhere in search of a fortune, dharma, artha, kaama, moksham (Righteousness, Wealth, Worldly pleasures, eternal bliss). After the failure of their valiant attempts, they recognize that they are getting weaker and weaker, the shore is nowhere in sight, and also realize that they are totally lost on their current position. Swami Desikan writes *ilaiththu vizum kaakam pool*" (Raven which is so exhaustively tired and gives up) also makes an example of a bird to get the same idea across. Finally, deserting their own attempts, they return to the Lord, make a complete surrender to Him, and keep an unshakable faith that He will take them to the destination. In reality, this method is a lot safer and surer too. The main mast provides nice perch for the bird to sit on and also helps to identify the ship from a distance. Similarly Aacharya (guru or teacher) and his tridhandaham (three sticks tied together with a flag at the top) helps the individual soul to identify and access the Lord. The shadow of aacharya also provides a great place to spent the rest of the life, peacefully and happily.

The eligibility for Prapatti hinges on two important criteria: Realizing the utter inability (aakinchanyam) and renouncing other demi-gods, route or paltry rewards (ananyagathithvam). Only Srimun Narayana can grant you the moksham, so why bother with others? (Sri Mahalakshmi and aacharyas are recommenders and you need them). You want the fastest and cheapest method, don't you? It is almost impossible for other routes like karma, gnjana and bhakthi yoga to fetch the result faster. Don't get tricked by paltry rewards; you want the ultimate one. Hold on to the Lord's feet humbly, pray to him in a sorrowful note, and request Him to grant the moksham (the ultimate bliss) which lies on the other side of the Viraja River. Have an immense faith that He is only the means and ends. Never look for any backup or alternates. Even if Lord Srimun Naarayana deserts us, we don't have no choice except go back to him - that is what Kulasekaara aazvaar emphasizes here.

What we learn here -
1. Prapatti is THE only means guaranteed and the shortest path to moksham.
2. All it requires you to give up other means. What you have to do is very little.
3. Aachrya is the only intermediary through the prapatti process can be accomplished.
4. After Prapatti, have peace and enjoy; lead life adhering to the scripts.

Heaven gives its glimpses only to those
Not in position to look too close

(Robert Frost) [Heaven = moksham, too close = self-ego]

Three Minutes - 24
Teacher Student Relation

Om
Sahanaa vavatu, sahanau bhunaktu
saha viiryam kara vaa vahai
tejasvi nau adhiitam astu
maa vid visaavahai
om santi santi santi
(peace mantra for upanishads under Krishna [black] Yajur vedas)

saha naa = (May we) both (of) us
avatu = be protected
saha naa = (May we) both (of) us
bhunaktu = be nourished
karavaavahai = (May we) acquire
viiryam = capacity or energy
astu = let it be
tejasvi = be brillaint
nau = for us
adhitam = what is studied
ma vidvisavahai = (we) not argue with each other
santhi = peace

The practice of meditation, a state of concentrated attention (dhyana), has occurred worldwide for personal improvement or to focus on God, since ancient times. A Mantra emphasizes sound vibration and thus, the correct pronunciation is essential. That is why vedic chanting (scripture verse repeating) was passed on as a vocal tradition for centuries.

Reciting (japa) those sacred mantras creates a spiritual ambience and aids in spreading the eternal message of love, harmony, and peace. The incantation of these improve medical stimulation, breathing, other health situations, and an overall enrichment of daily life.

Santi mantra, a benedictory or invocation verse, is usually chanted before initiating a study of any upansihad. This particular mantra for Kato Upanishad says –

"May we both of us, the teacher and student (aacharya and sishya) be protected. May we both of us grow, shine, and become strengthened. May this knowledge make us both together strong and courageous. May our quest of study be fruitful. May we never know discord. May there be peace, peace, and peace".

Both the teacher and the student recite this verse together to calibrate themselves before sharing of the knowledge commences. They pray to the Lord and seek His blessings for a pious, peaceful, and productive study as well as for the elimination of hurdles. The obstacles, as defined by great sage Patanjali, include sickness, dullness, doubts, carelessness, laziness, loss of memory, difficulty to focus, etc; most importantly they request blessings for a conducive relation to enhance the communication between them, without which, the transfer of knowledge will not be smooth.

So, this prayer is as important to the teacher as it is to the student. It is also believed that devas (angels) cause these hurdles so that ordinary human beings will

not master the brahmavidya (Learning about the ultimate Lord), forcing humans not to compete with them.

The courage and strength mentioned here need not refers to physical strength, aggressiveness, or motivation to fight. But rather it is inner strength that arises from gaining the right knowledge and progress towards true wisdom . The ultimate product of learning and eventual wisdom is knowing the right stuff.

Life's purpose is knowledge. Amazingly, people from vedic periods recognize that the destination, as well as the journey, should be enjoyable. During this learning time frame, disparagement of one another is discouraged. That is, avoiding two poison pills during learning: hatred and misunderstanding.

Knowledge imparting has to satisfy two requirements.

1. At the **intellectual level** it should be about the right stuff.

2. At the **practical, humane level**, it should have an amicable environment for the pursuit of knowledge, that is to learn at peace.

So moving from darkness to light, brilliant and effective efforts, all those statements applies to both acquiring knowledge and to the environment under which it is done.

What we learn from here –

1. Target the right knowledge.

2. The journey is as important as the destination. Though objective is stressed, access should be pleasant.

3. Student and the teacher need to work towards the goal. Interpersonal relations are critical to establish an effective communication.

4. Service to the humanity is the real purpose of learning and acquiring wisdom.

"A mind is a fire to be kindled and not a vessel to be filled"
- Plutarch

Three Minutes - 25
Ohhhhhh, no.
Not my people! Never!

thannadiyaar thiRaththu akatthuth
thaamaraiyaaL aakilum sidhaku uraikkumeel
ennadiyaar adhu seyyaar seydhaareel nanRu seydhaar enbar poolum
(periyaazvaar,
periyaazvaar thirumozi 4-9-2)

தன்னடியார் திறத்து அகத்து
தாமரையாள் ஆகிலும் சிதகு உரைக்குமேல்
என்னடியார் அது செய்யார்;
செயதாரேல் நன்று செய்தார் என்பர் போலும்

aakilum = Even if
thaamaraiyaaL = Sri Mahalakshmi
uraikkumeel = tells
thiRaththu = about
thannadiyaar = His devotees'
sidhaku = flaws (and)
akatthuth = related information
ennadiyaar = "My devotees
adhu seyyaar = will not do those things
seydhaareel = (even) If they did it
nanRu = (only the) good ones
seydhaar = they would have done"
poolum = it looks that (is what)
enbar = [the Lord] might have said.

Vishnuchittar (one in whose mind Vishnu comes and stays), known as Periyaazvaar, was born in Srivilliputtur and was performing service (kaimkaryam) to the Lord by cultivating a small flower garden (nandavanam) and offering fresh, special garlands (maalai) for the local deity. He is unique among all aazvaars in blessing the Lord with his "Tirupallandu" translating to "Long live for many, many, many more years". His affection and loving care towards the Lord was so erupting (pongkum parivu) that he could not control his motherly feelings of worrying about Lord's safety. It was so incredible, that he went as far as to the extent of completely forgetting about himself as an ordinary human being (akinchana chetanan) and started blessing the all powerful Lord (sarvasakthi bhagavan).

To escape from bondage (samsaara), for any individual soul, there are only two options - Bhakthi (deep devotion and constant contemplation) and Prapatti (total unconditional surrender); the latter is an easier to perform, quickly rewarding, and universally applicable. In this Kali Yuga, one needs to go through an aacharya (teacher, guru) and Sri Maha Lakshmi (inseparable consort of Srimun Naarayanaa) for the Prapatti process to succeed. They are the inevitable reccommenders and mediators.

We, as chetanas, are submerged under the ocean of sins (papams), hold on to the mother's feet and beg her. Despite of our ageless misdeeds and continued faults, Lakshmi, by natural kindness (dhaya) and extreme compassion (vaatsalyam), and tolerance

(kshama), pardons us and recommends to the Lord for moksham (ultimate bliss). The Lord may be the final authority for moksham, but He has no choice, when Sri Maha Lakshmi gives the recommendation. He may be the Lord for everyone, but he still listens to His wife every single time. Thus, one notices the power that She wields and her ability to sway (vaalabhyam) Him. Her mediating efforts can be described as "She lies in between, where one side is the crib and the other side is the bed (oru pakkam thottilum, oru pakkam kattilum) to take care of both of them".

Azvaar describes here, an imaginary conversation between Sri Maha Lakshmi and Srimun Naarayanaa. Lakshmi was referring a chetana that she has recommended for moksham, sometime in the past. Now, She wants to verify His steadfastness and likes to tease Him. She pretends and says " My dear, remember that chetana, the other day, I have recommended! I didn't know then, but now after looking through his ledger of never-ending sins, it looks that he is the worst of all sinners. His actions are so bad that I am now second guessing about my recommendation. So, please forget about granting moksham to him and withdraw your offer." Remember, this is just a test.

Hearing this, Lord gets really angry. Remember, this is true. He says " Not a chance! If I promise once, that is the end of it. Never going back on my word. Besides, You said they are My devotees. They have reached me as the sole refuge. If it is so, they would not have done those (wrongful) actions, what You are mentioning. Even if they had done something, all I see is only good deeds. I don't see anything bad here like what you say". Thus Lord ascertains His promise. In essence, Bhagavan will reject any charges made against His devotees even if they were to arise from His own inseparable consort, Sri Maha Lakshmi herself.

When Swami Desikan refers Her as utterly merciful and unaware of punishment (ajnaatha nirgraham), why thaayaar, jagan maadha (mother for the world) of all the people will do such an act, one may ask? She simply wants to assure the world that Lord will never go back on His word. He will not desert us. He will not let anything to stand in between Him and His devotees. The Lord is brimming with innumerable (asankeya) noble qualities (kalyaana gunaas). Among them , bhaktha vaatsalyam (compassion towards devotees) and parama kaarunyam (extreme sympathy) stands tall. Because of this, when the chetana does prapatti once, He pardons and blesses him, however cruel he might have been in the past and keeps up His word, whatever comes up, as long as the chetana is still faithful like a married woman (pathivrata).

Here, Periyaazvaar might have wanted to show the greatness of the Lord, but who wouldn't say such remarks about his/her son-in-law? But Sri Maha Lakshmi goes one

step above of Him to prove two things. 1. Lord will keep His promise (sathya vradhan), no matter what. 2. Affirm the poor souls like us , that He will never desert us. To prove that point, to show the world the greatness of her husband, she even hides all her natural noble qualities and pretends to say things that are quite contradictory to her character. Now ask yourself, who is greater of the two? Srimun Naarayanaa or Sri Maha Lakshmi?

What we learn from here

1. To err is chetana. to ignore is Esvara. Don't ever forget Lord's infinite mercy

2. Shrug off your anger and dislikes. When all powerful Lord Himself ignores our faults, who are we to get mad on someone?

3. Lift yourself high . Bad feelings come from myopic and microscopic look. It takes a great heart to be magnanimous.

4. Patience is not weakness. Respect people who are patient. Don't go and tell them, "You are so dumb,.if he would have done the same thing to me..." etc.

5. Listen to your wife. Generally, she is more right than you are. (I know, now I am getting into trouble!)

But love is blind, and Lord cannot see
Flaws of one, who made a frantic plea